

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

given us a virtuous example by her teaching and her life, nor helped us with her prayers before God as much as she could and ought, and if she had not satisfied our needs as she was bound, and for every pain, trouble, and sorrow of which she had been the cause to us, saying: 'Every failing has been through my want of knowledge. But I verily confess in the sight of God that I have always had, and have, a continuous and inflamed desire of your perfection and salvation ; and if you, my most beloved children, follow this, you will be, as I said, my crown and my glory.' And at the end, while we all wept, she blessed each individually, in her usual way, in Christ."¹

On the evening of Holy Saturday, March 24, Fra Bartolomeo di Domenico arrived in Rome. He was then prior of San Domenico at Siena, and had been sent by his provincial on business of the order. Not knowing of Catherine's illness, he at once went to the house, and was aghast at her altered aspect. Only by bending down his ear to her mouth, and then with difficulty, could he hear her whisper that it was well with her by the grace of our sweet Saviour. The next morning, it being Easter Day, he celebrated Mass in her room ; when, to the great wonder and consolation of all, she rose from her couch unaided, and, together with her other spiritual children, received the Blessed Sacrament from his hands. Afterwards, she relapsed into her motionless condition, but had recovered her speech sufficiently to talk freely with him during the few days that he remained in Rome. At length, Bartolommeo's duty calling him back, she bade him return to Siena, laying upon him as her last command that he should make himself the constant companion of Fra Raimondo, who would shortly be elected master-general of the order. The friar then implored her, if it was the will of God that he should go, to obtain from Him as a sign that he might see her restored to health first. Accordingly, on the following

¹ This was first published by Gigli, apparently from a contemporary MS., as an appendix to the *Diakgp.* Cf. *Legenda*, III. iv. 1-5 (§ § 360-364). It is clear from Barduccio's letter to Suor Caterina that this took place many days before the end, before either Fra Bartolommeo or Stefano Maconi came to Rome.